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ABSTRACT

Eleven stories describe traditional practices and true adventures of the Tlingit hunters of Southeast Alaska. The stories are accompanied by learning activities and discussion questions for students and are arranged under the headings of bear, mountain goat and deer, and seal and sea lion. Topics include hunting weapons and strategies, bravery, the training of hunting dogs, behavior of the hunted animals, preparing and preserving game for food, and uses of game for clothing and tools. Suggested activities ask students to collect and record additional true adventure stories, study wildlife, dramatize and illustrate the stories, carve an animal from soap or clay, and consider the distinctions between sport and survival hunting. (JH)

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HUNTING
Stories

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by Frank Johnson

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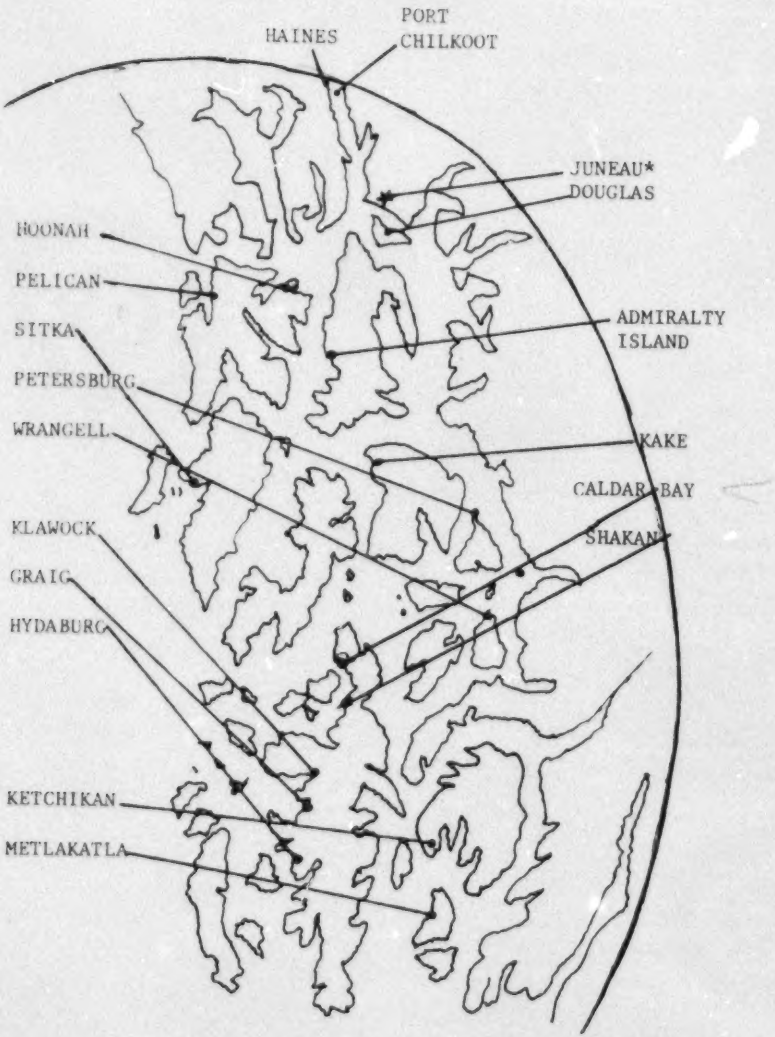
STORIES WRITTEN BY: FRANK JOHNSON

Frank Johnson was born in 1894 about forty miles south of Kake in a camp along the banks of a river. He attended the Sitka, Alaska, Training School and the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. He graduated from Salem High School in 1917. He went on to the University of Oregon and received his B.S. degree in 1927.

Back in Alaska he became active in the Native Brotherhood and served as Grand President in 1931. He taught school in Kake and Klawock and also fished off a seine boat he owned on equal shares with his brother. When someone was needed to organize the cannery workers and gill-netters union, he assumed that responsibility.

Mr. Johnson was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives on the Republican ticket in 1947. He served for 10 years. During that time he was sent to Washington, D.C. to attend hearings and was Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee for the Territory.

When he retired from the legislature, he went back to teaching school and fishing. In 1970 he moved to Ketchikan. He was married three times, does not have any children of his own but enjoys his many nieces and nephews.


HAINES
PORT CHILKOOT
JUNEAU*
DOUGLAS
HOONAH
PELICAN
SITKA
ADMIRALTY ISLAND
PETERSBURG
WRANGELL
KAKE
CALDAR BAY
SHAKAN
KLAWOCK
CRAIG
HYDABURG
KETCHIKAN
METLAKATLA

"In a high mountain top cave many strong hunters entered using torches or spruce pitch for light." This cave was the winter home of many hibernating bears. It took skilled hunters and brave men to enter armed only with spears. The Tlingit hunter of Southeast Alaska was skilled and brave.

The stories in this book are true. The brave men you will read about are the relatives and friends of the man who shared these stories with us. If you are the kind of person who enjoys adventure, read on.

PART I
Hunting Bear

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

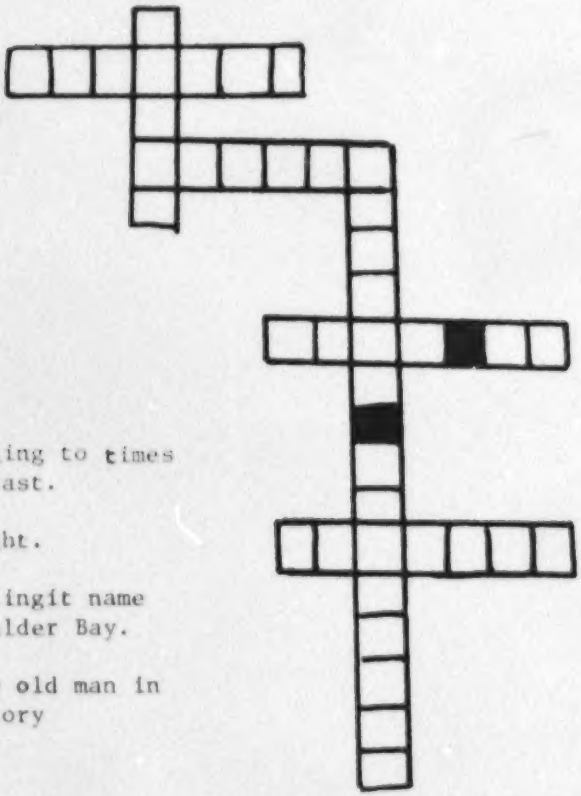
1. Map work

   a. Can you find the village of Shakan on this map?

   b. Trace a line from Ketchikan to the site of the village of Shakan.

   c. Trace a line from Kake, Frank Johnson's home town to the village of Shakan.

2. New words and expressions found in the story "Black Bear Cave."



Across

1. Belonging to times long past.
2. To fight.
3. The Tlingit name for Calder Bay.
4. A very old man in the story

Down

1. A dark sticky substance.
2. Two people claiming descent from a common ancestor.

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3. Frank Johnson said that the story "Black Bear Cave" captured his and his young friends' imagination. When you read the story imagine you are one of the hunters. Now write a story about what you imagined took place inside the cave between the men and the bear.

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BLACK BEAR CAVE

On the north end of Prince of Wales Island about six miles from a village called Shakan is a salmon stream in a bay named Calder -- Soax da, in Tlingit. Let it be known, there are miles of marble and lime in this area. On the southern side is a mountain of such material rising sheer from the rock.

Koonate, a very old man who was our tribal brother, one day told us that the cave rather high up on its face was a black bear cave. It was discovered many generations back that there was another entrance at the top of the mountain, which was used by the bear. There was a funnel-shaped depression formed, long ago, probably by rain water. The bears entered on the top depression and many hibernated in that cave during the long winter cold.

In the ancient days men with no modern guns entered with spears and knives and killed as many bear as they needed and could handle. The trees

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partly covered the cave, but it was so high that no bear could enter there. The face of the mountain was smooth and colored a dark gray from exposure to the weather.

A party of strong hunters entered using torches of spruce pitch for light. There were no details as to how they killed the bear. There must have been great fights but no tales of individual combat survived.

As children we imagined many adventures, for the hunting weapons were only spears and knives. When they had enough bear the men came to the entrance, on the bay side, and threw the carcasses down, went back, and came out the long way at the top.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

1. The following words are some you will find on the next few pages. Use a dictionary to find the meanings.

   indigenous -

   efficient -

   insulation -

   diverted -

   thrust -

   vital -

2. Bears feed on vegetation and animal flesh. After reading "Bear Meat" make a list of what bears eat. Can you add foods to the list that weren't mentioned in the story?
3. The Native people of Southeast Alaska hunted the bear in what season? Why?
4. The story "Bear Meat" describes the way the Native people hunted using dogs and a spear. Draw a picture of the hunt.

BEAR MEAT

Bear tend to feed on salmon berries, crabs and sand fleas. In other words, they feed on both animal and vegetation. Bear meat is not eaten after the animal has been feeding on dead fish. The taste is not right. The meat of the bear was prized when the animal was killed while in hibernation or shortly after it emerges from the den in the spring.

They hibernate late in the fall, the females first, big males later. After the bear have been in hibernation for a month or more the flavor is better and the fur is thicker, especially after January.

The bear look for a place that is dry and protected, this, as a coincidence, turns out to be high in the mountain side where drainage is good and where thick snowfall is a decided asset. Snow is a very efficient insulation. The bear digs out a suitable place in the big root system of trees. Often the branches of the Hemlock are

By M. Blank

put in for the bed. The opening to the den is usually not as large as the size of the bear would seem to demand.

The bear feeds heavily during the summer months especially just before hibernation. The rivers teem with salmon, trout, ducks, geese and sawbills. As the snow piles up it covers the den for as much as six or eight feet and as the spring rains come the snow packs down and refreezing hardens the cover. This is one of the principal reasons why man in Southeast Alaska tamed and trained dogs. Trained dogs can smell out and find bear even when the snow cover is still deep. Usually six or more dogs are used. Though the bear may escape before the men arrive, the noise of the dogs' barking show which direction the bear is running. The heavy soles of the bear must be removed to accommodate growth and replaced by new soles while in hibernation. The hunters claim that the feet are tender for sometime after that, until the bear gets accustomed

to it again. The fact that dogs will nip the bear delays and slows the speed of the bear as well. A fast man can overtake a bear.

In real ancient times only spears, bows, arrows and deadfalls were used. In using spears, hunters learn to respect the speed, strength and ability of bears they kill. Often the snow is soft or may have a crust too thin to support the weight of a full grown bear and consequently slows it down. Snow shoes were used by hunters.

The hunter using the spear alone does not hit the bear when it is looking at him, he times the thrust when the bear's attention is momentarily diverted or runs up, thrusts the spear, and swiftly as possible pulls it up and gets out of reach. If he hits a vital spot such as the heart he is lucky, perhaps skilled enough, otherwise it may turn out to be a real battle. The bear will turn on the dogs, sometimes scattering them, and then run. As might be expected just as some men are better athletes then the average, one sometimes

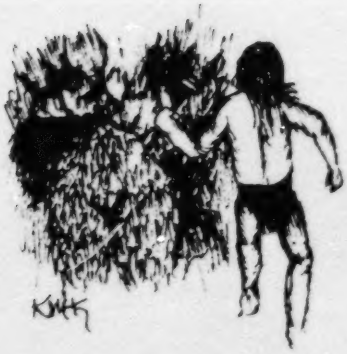
meets a real fast bear or one that is especially strong.

The meat of the bear was smoked and dried. The paws were also prepared and eaten. The pieces were heated in a hot fire and the thick soles were knocked off as well as the horn claws. The hair was burned off completely and then boiled until well cooked. It may be dried and stored in seal or bear oil. The rest of the meat is smoked.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Hunting stories like "Gambier Bay Jim" and "Willie Grant" were often the inspiration for Native songs. Have your teacher borrow some tapes and listen to Native music.
2. Choose one of the hunting stories and with a few other class members act it out for the rest of the class.
3. Make a list of all the books on bears in your school library.
4. One of the interesting things about this book is that the stories were told to Frank Johnson by his father, brother, and friends.

Why not ask your father, grandfather or a friend about an adventure they may have had. You may want to write it down and share it with the class.



GAMBIER BAY JIM

He was not particularly noted for his speed as a young man, but he later became famous among his own people as a unique and brave hunter of brown bear. He had his home in Gambier Bay and thus became known. What made his method of hunting bear so unusual was that when the bear was

in hibernation he went right into the den with no firearms. He used dogs and a knife. According to his version, the bear tried to get out as the man entered the den. Since the opening was not wide as a rule, he stabbed the animal as it passed him, usually mortally. It became routine for him to hunt in that manner.

WILLIE GRANT

Man is not always so lucky as Willie Grant. Willie went up near Red Bluff Bay on Baranof Island on Sunday afternoon. He had only 22 caliber rifle...far too small for a place where bears were common.

He was on the steep side of the mountain, when a bear suddenly attacked him. It made no noise. He did not see it come at him. The bear shook, pawed and mauled him. All this time they rolled down the slope. Suddenly the bear stopped, but stood straddling his body. He lay still, his rifle lay uphill, a few feet from him. He mentally measured the distance and his chances of reaching the gun. He suddenly dashed, picked up the rifle, but had no time to get off a shot when the bear jumped him again. Purely by accident the butt of the .22 was on the ground with its muzzle straight up. The bear landed right on the gun. The uppermost point, went right into his body. The bear made a backward flip and went

right over the edge of a cliff.

The action over, Willie could hardly move. His father-in-law and teenage boys were in the motor boat and heard the roar of the bear. They all came up and found him literally covered with deep claw marks, bleeding. They made a crude crutch for him and assisted him to the boat.

They wanted to take him to the hospital in Petersburg, a distance of 65-75 miles, but they were storm bound by a strong Northwest wind.

"A jar of vaseline stopped my cries," he briefly concluded. "They stuffed each deep claw mark with the vaseline and greatly relieved the pain." He recovered since he was a strong and healthy man, but with a great deal of suffering.

MY FATHER SKON

My father Skon was a real professional. He raised, trained and cared for his dogs, usually about 6-8 in number. They were well fed, sometimes the diet included crisp, hair seal fat, which dogs relished. But when the actual day of the hunt arrived, or even several days sooner, fats were purposely excluded. Fat slowed down the speed and stamina of the dogs and may slow their reflexes.

One day the dogs found a black bear still in hibernation. They rushed right into the den. The most valuable one was a somewhat small, curly haired dog that was very aggressive. He was at the front of the attacking dogs. The bear fought back with heightening strokes of his lethal paws. The dogs made quick lunges, retreated and attacked again, but they attacked as a group and crowded each other. At last, the leader in making the attack, was in turn attacked by the bear. This time the dogs behind him got in his way as he struck and swiftly backed. He bumped into the

other dogs close behind him and was caught in the claws. The bear, pulled him into the den and started to maul him.

Without a thought my father acted contrary to all his prior practice. He rushed into the den with his gun, ready to fire. The bear tried to get away as far as it could but had no place to go. He stood up and was right up against the ceiling of the den. He fired quickly and backed out. The dogs rushed in but the bear was already dying.

PART II

Hunting Mountai.. Goat & Deer

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Frank Johnson says in "Hunting in the High Mountains" that the best hunters shared with the weaker or older men. Do you think that was fair? After all, the strong men did the work. Make a list or have a class discussion about the ways people share withone another today.
2. Why did the men in "Hunting in the High Mountains" dry their meat before packing it down?
3. Look at the booklets "Haida Fishing" and "Making Snow Shoes." Using the information on preparing and preserving deer meat you will find in the story "Deer" make a booklet for the class to share. You might want to work on this in a group.

HUNTING IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS

Hunting was a man's work especially so on the mainland where mountains were high and very steep. The best places were where the men could not go up and return with the game they killed in one day. They made shelters of whatever materials they were able to get. They would cut the meat and smoke it daily. Naturally these temporary shelters were very close to the timber line. This not only enabled them to rest and sleep but because the meat in drying became much lighter, they were able after some days, say ten, to take the equivalent of many animals.

This type of hunting in rich areas enabled the men to acquire intimate and detailed knowledge. New places and the easiest ways to reach feeding places were passed on. The best hunters shared with weaker or older men. Some men agreed to keep the fire up and prepare food, thus sharing the work.

Sometimes the animals were made to come to

narrow passes where snares were previously prepared and set. Summoned by smoke signals other men from the low beach areas came to help or to pack. When it was determined they had enough they came down. Even the hides were much lighter. Mountain goats, sheep, ground hogs and other animal were prepared to last a long time. They did not spoil!

The women and young people usually did the drying but high mountain hunting helped to ease the burden on the women and freed them to do other daily duties. Mountains were claimed by clans. Trails were established in favorite places. Some places were rich enough to warrant the building of more permanent houses somewhere near the beach. Equipment could then be stored for later use.

KINGEESH

He was a Haida, who married a Klawock woman. A strong and active man he climbed up a high mountain near Klawock Lake with a number of the other hunters. When they reached the untimbered area at the top, a short conference was held. One group went to the right at the edge of the timber line, while the group he was with went straight up.

A short ways up he saw a deer sitting in the open, feeding or chewing his cud. He shot and the deer went into a thicket wounded. He followed. Since there were other deer the group of men scattered, but all went in the same general direction, the group hunting purpose being to keep the game from escaping.

He reached the spot where the deer went and saw it sitting on a small knoll. There was shooting below. He took it for granted the deer was almost dead. He laid his gun down and quietly approached. He jumped the deer with his knife to cut his throat. It was a beautiful buck. It

jumped up. He held on to the horns, but his body hung down with his feet dragging on the ground and the deer's eyes were completely covered by his legs. The deer ran straight down the slope and kept running until it suddenly stopped.

Kingeesh looked in one direction and saw he was on the extreme edge of a tree's roots. He was stopped from going over the cliff when the deer's legs caught in the roots. Kingeesh could not move for fear of a tumble over the precipice north of the buck. He was literally trapped.

His pals finally spotted him and his predicament. A few minutes later they killed the deer and saved Kingeesh's life.

YOUNG DEER

Cold weather brings into unusually sharp focus our concern for the survival of deer. One cold morning in Kake the tide was out. A neighbor noticed there was a young deer struggling to rise from the water on the beach. It would partly rise, stagger and fall back into the water. My neighbor and I went down. I told him to pick it up and carry it to my house. We carried it not to my house, but to his house. He insisted!

30

The deer was indeed weak. There was a noise. It was grinding its teeth. It was placed near the stove and it lay back, exhausted and cold. The noise kept up for a time, nearly an hour. The hair began to dry and it was given water. Toward evening it suddenly rose and walked about and fed on scraps. It was a typical deer. It had no horns and the contour of the head appeared round. It was thin and poor. It had thick hair, but hardly any flesh. It was decided that it might be better if it were given water, fed and then put in the chicken house near the house. A boy put a makeshift harness on it and started to take it to the new place. The dogs saw it and with noisy barking started for the deer. The deer struggled, finally got loose, and dashed for the dock area about 75-100 yards into the sea, plunged into the water and started for Grave Island about one half mile out. No one knew if it lived or died of exposure.

Deer habitually swim to nearby islands

in the fall and winter. If there is enough feed and good water they are usually in good shape. This little incident shows what can happen to deer in cold weather.

DEER HUNTING

This article is somewhat late. Hunting season is over. In the old days hunting by our people was done at any and all seasons. The fact that hunting areas were claimed and controlled by clans helped to prevent over hunting. It seems to have kept the wolf population down though there was no such thing as bounty. Perhaps the constant presence of hunters and their dogs helped.

In November the full grown male deer was left strictly alone. The reason was simple and compelling. They smelled mauseating and the meat and fat tasted the same. About December the smell starts to abate and by January they are normal. However, the male deer loses fat early and the meat is then not so attractive. On the contrary the female stays in good shape quite late.

There were no easy ways to preserve deer. The hide was tanned by the woman and made into moccasins and other garments. The meat was put up when prime. It was permissable to put up

enough for winter use. The meat was cut up fresh and the strips were cut so that they were not thicker than about 1 inch. The hind quarter comes in several sections and they are cut in such a way as to keep them in one piece while hung up. When enough are ready a real hot fire is built under them, enough to melt and cause the fat to run. Hemlock branches with the needles intact are added and thick rolling smoke is made and then allowed to die down. In a few minutes the meat is smoked enough and moved back away from the intensely heated area and away from the smoke. It is then slowly dried until done.

When enough for a batch is ready they are cut in convenient sizes (about 7"x7") and boiled until cooked. Again the meat is put up. This time small sharp sticks are made ready and the cooked meat is put on sticks about one inch apart and dried until quite dry. If it is to be eaten within a few days it will be dried less. To keep for weeks and months the meat is well dried and

put in fresh seal oil and kept in a cool place such as a root house. It is ready to eat now at any time. Put up this way even the poor thin deer meat may be eaten. The fat ribs may be kept and cooked with potatoes and hard dried salmon which has been soaked in this way is called "Teeyee" in Tlingit and constituted an important item of food. One such meal is good till evening. The back bone is boiled fresh and plain. Other bones are cooked the same way. Then the meat may be barbecued in summer or roasted on a specially made "Tseek."

Dogs were trained to hunt deer on the smaller islands. A special way is to take a young dog, say in spring time, and prepare a piece of deer hide from a dark patch on the joint in the hind leg, which has the strong characteristic odor. The dog is grasped and its head put so as to come out between the legs and in front. The crucial time is now! A slit is made on the tip of its nose with a sharp knife so as to draw a

little blood and the hard brown patch of deer hide is used to wipe the blood. An alternate method is to find an old hoof which has lost all the flesh and is only a hollow piece. The blood is dropped inside and tracks are made on a fine sandy beach going into the water. Thereafter, believe it or not, the dog will know the odor of deer and unerringly follow, find the deer and chase it into the water. Dogs are similarly treated to hunt bear, land otter, etc. An untrained dog will sometimes chase an animal but not in any systematic way.

PART III

Hunting Seal and Sealion

Teacher Notes: The distinction between sport hunting and hunting for survival should be made clear to the class.

Today the hunting of bear, deer and seal is not always a matter of survival. Some people hunt for the sport of it alone. After you read "Seal Hunting" discuss with the class whether the Native people of Southeast Alaska were hunting for sport or for survival.

This may be a good time to invite someone from Fish and Game in to speak to the class about animal protection laws today.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Seals have a beautiful streamlined shape and have been studied by artists since the beginning of time. Sculptors particularly enjoy the seal. Before you read the next story you may want to carve a seal from soap or clay.
2. Read "Seal Hunting" and illustrate in a cartoon the little story Frank Johnson tells Charlie Jackson and a friend about seal hunting.

1979

SEAL

Another old hunter told me that seals often take short naps on sunken rocks and come up for air every few minutes. When you see seals on rocks, and killer whales appear, the hunters are in luck. The seals are afraid of the deadly killer whales and stay close. They may even try to hide in convenient depressions and large cracks. Strong men who are fast on their feet hunted with clubs. One does not club downward, missing can mean breaking your club on the rock.

When the seals are running as on a gravelly beach, they protect themselves by pulling in their heads. If you hit a seal with its head pulled in you will hit a cushion of fat and will not kill it.

In this one case a man hit on the idea to make his club similar to a baseball bat. He would come up on a running seal and step on its flippers. The seal would rear back to bite, but the man was quicker, the head and neck were exposed. One hit killed the seal. A big male bull

can be quite dangerous. A friend of ours was in Karkeen with Charlie Jackson when they spotted a great many seal basking in the spring sunshine. The old man gave him a club and told him to club them. The first bull he faced he hit with all his might. The seal caught his club in its teeth. A fast wrestling for the club took place. After a good deal of scuffle the seal escaped. He hit another, more fights ensued.

He came back to see the old man doubled over laughing. Next time he was given two clubs. The first club was a small one. When the seal bit the small club he hit with the big one and got his seal.

SEA LION HUNTING

Sea lion hunting was special and risky. They frequent the stormiest rocky points. To shoot the best tasting kinds the experts carefully look over the herd basking on the rocky places. The larger ones are lighter in color, while the smaller, younger ones are darker brown. Also, the large, fat ones spread out, the younger appear rounded. The darker ones have an unpleasant, strong taste.

To butcher and move the heavy animals without having to lift them out of the water, experienced men cut the gullet, blow up the stomach and tie the cut end to prevent air from escaping. Otherwise, the sea lion may sink. Blown up they are easily towed to the camp and butchered.

The flippers and strips of the fat with the skin left on is thrown into a lively burning camp fire. The burnt hair is then scrapped clean and the skin thrown back into the fire and cooked. Our people preferred them cooked that way.

The young ones are killed only for special

use. The intestines are cleaned, dried and twisted. They are very strong and were used for bow strings to hunt large game deer. Some bows were made not only thicker but wider. These had such strong pull they could be used in hunting only by the strong men. To keep the bow string from doing damage, special protection devices were built into the bows. Wooden braces were fastened to the bow on each side of the hand in such a way that when a bow is shot at full power the bow string can't hurt or damage the unprotected hand. This system stops the backlask of the bow strings. In those early days boys played games that sharpened their skills in using bows and arrows. They hunted squirrels, robins, wrens and even scooters and mallard ducks as well as other water birds.